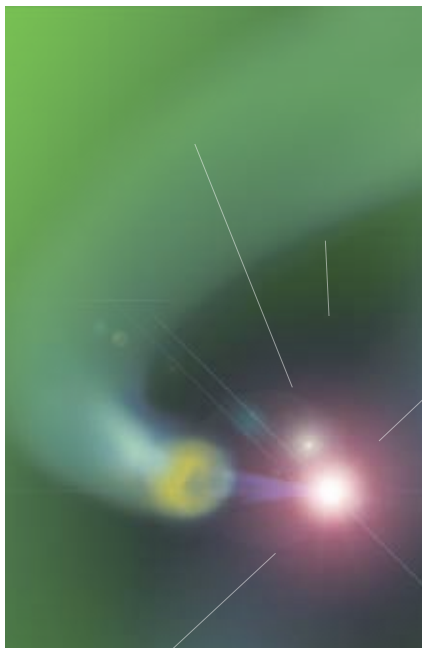


AGD:FACTSHEET FOR THE PATIENT

Compiled for you by the Academy of Laser Dentistry



LASERS IN DENTISTRY

What is a laser and how does it work?

A laser is an instrument that produces a very narrow, intense beam of light energy. When laser light comes in contact with tissue, it causes a reaction. The light produced by the laser can remove, vaporize, or shape tissue.

Are lasers used in dentistry?

Yes, lasers have been used in dentistry since 1990. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has determined that lasers can be used as a safe and effective treatment for a wide range of dental procedures. Lasers are often used in conjunction with other dental instruments.

How are lasers used in dentistry?

Dental lasers can be used to:

- correct speech problems caused by a tongue-tie, which prevents normal tongue movement.
- uncover partially erupted wisdom teeth.
- remove decay from a cavity and prepare the tooth for a new filling.
- remove muscle pulls, as seen in orthodontic patients.
- manage gum tissue during impressions for crowns.
- remove swollen tissues caused by medications.
- perform biopsy procedures.
- remove inflamed gum tissues and reduce the amount of bacteria within a periodontal pocket.
- remove or reshape excess gum and bone tissues during crown lengthening procedures.
- treat abscessed gums and infections in root canals.
- reduce the discomfort of canker and cold sores.
- activate whitening chemicals that are used to lighten teeth.

What are the benefits of using dental lasers?

There are several advantages. Dentists may not need to use a drill or administer anesthesia, allowing the patient to enjoy a more relaxed dental experience. Laser procedures can be more precise. Also, lasers can reduce symptoms and healing times associated with traditional therapies; reduce the amount of bacteria in both diseased gum tissue and in tooth cavities; and control bleeding during surgery.

Are dental lasers safe?

If the dental laser is used according to accepted practices by a trained practitioner, then it is at least as safe as other dental instruments. However, just as you wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from prolonged exposure to the sun, when your dentist performs a laser procedure, you will be asked to wear special eyeglasses to protect your eyes from the laser.

How can I be sure my dentist is properly trained to use a laser?

Ask your dentist questions about the extent of his or her laser education and training. Make sure that your dentist has participated in educational courses and received training by the manufacturer. Many dental schools, dental associations, and the Academy of Laser Dentistry (ALD) offer dental laser education. The ALD is the profession's independent source for current dental laser education and credentialing.

How will I know if treatment with a dental laser is an option for me?

Ask your dentist. Although the laser is a very useful dental instrument, it is not appropriate for every dental procedure.

Do you have questions about dental health?

At the AGD's Web site, you can search more than 300 oral health topics, post a dental question, sign up for e-newsletters, find an AGD dentist, and more.

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